

# Election Website Best Practices

Texas Association of Election Administrators  
2020 Mid-Winter Conference

January 10, 2020  
College Station, Texas

# Session objectives

- Better understand voters' informational needs
- Be familiar with principles of plain design and plain language
- Know immediate actions you can take to improve your election website
- Have resources to help you improve your site



# Nice to meet you!



**Whitney May**

Director

[whitney@techandciviclife.org](mailto:whitney@techandciviclife.org)

[@whitneymaybe](https://twitter.com/whitneymaybe)



**Kurt Sampsel**

Project Manager

[kurt@techandciviclife.org](mailto:kurt@techandciviclife.org)

[@kurt\\_sampsel](https://twitter.com/kurt_sampsel)

# Center for Tech and Civic Life



CENTER FOR  
TECH AND  
CIVIC LIFE

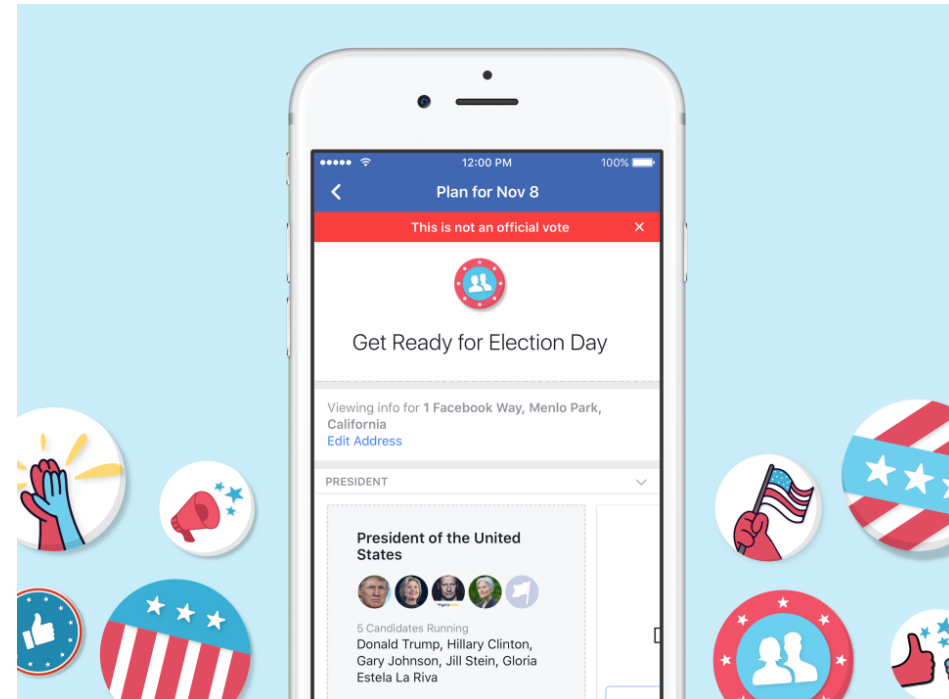
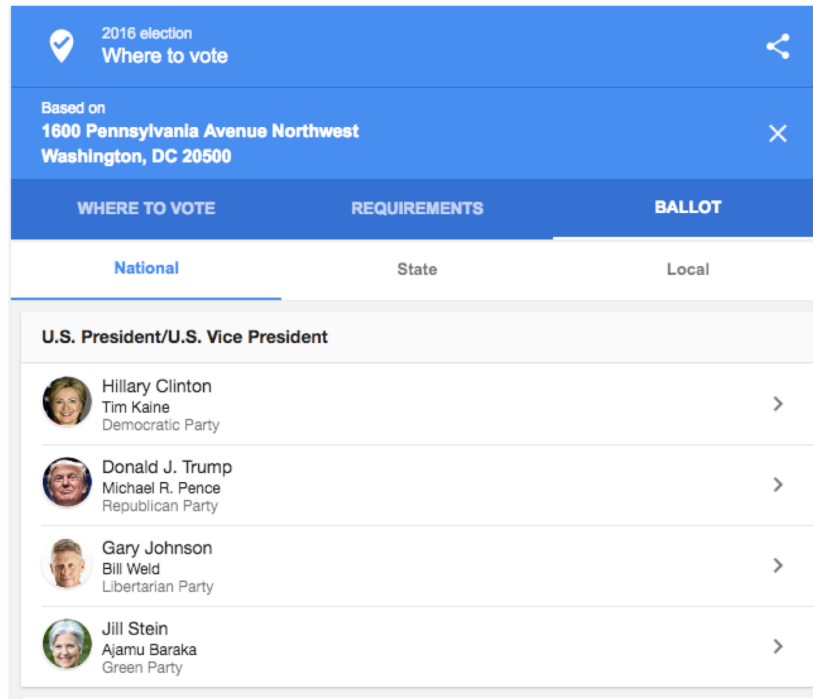
We connect Americans with the information they need to become and remain civically engaged, and ensure that our elections are more professional, inclusive, and secure.

@HelloCTCL

[www.techandciviclife.org](http://www.techandciviclife.org)

# Civic Data

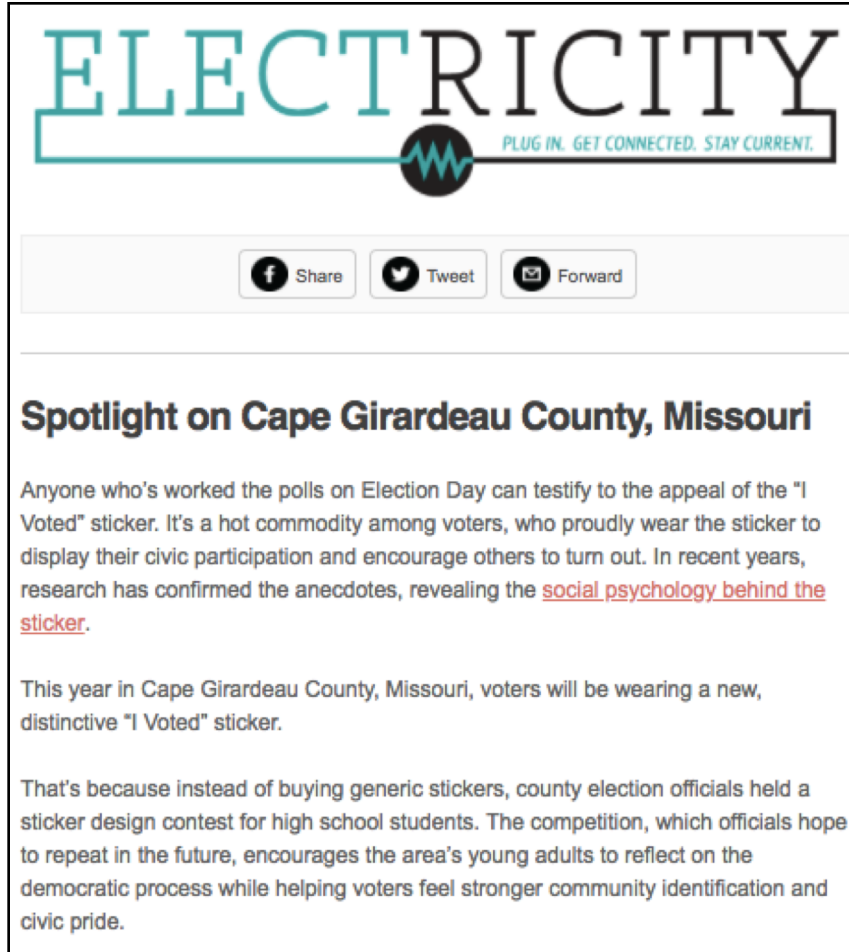
We provide affordable, open-source civic data so that voters can have a more informed and engaged relationship with their government.



# Government Services

We support election officials with industry best practices, free tech solutions, and cutting-edge training to make elections more trustworthy and inclusive.

# Best practices from the field



**ELECTRICITY**  
PLUG IN. GET CONNECTED. STAY CURRENT.

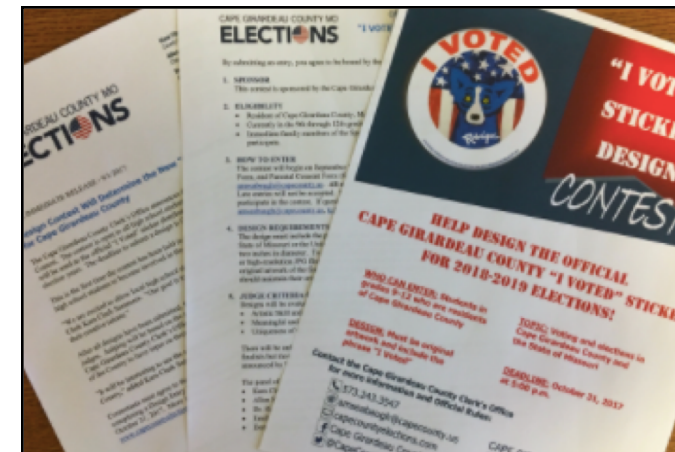
Share Tweet Forward

## Spotlight on Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

Anyone who's worked the polls on Election Day can testify to the appeal of the "I Voted" sticker. It's a hot commodity among voters, who proudly wear the sticker to display their civic participation and encourage others to turn out. In recent years, research has confirmed the anecdotes, revealing the [social psychology behind the sticker](#).

This year in Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, voters will be wearing a new, distinctive "I Voted" sticker.

That's because instead of buying generic stickers, county election officials held a sticker design contest for high school students. The competition, which officials hope to repeat in the future, encourages the area's young adults to reflect on the democratic process while helping voters feel stronger community identification and civic pride.



# Free tools


**ElectionTools.org**


Free, practical resources for election officials


Home


Sign up for updates


Search


  
Communication tools


  
Polling places

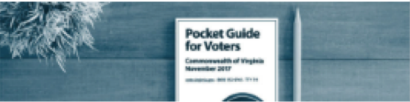
  
Election data

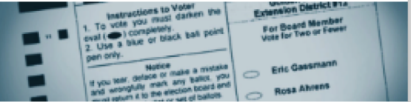
  
Social media & web

  
Images

  
Community outreach

  
**RFP how-to guide for election officials**  
Guidance to help you write a successful request-for-proposal document

  
**Pocket voter guide template**  
A template for creating a simple, informative pocket guide for voters

  
**Voting time estimator**  
An easy tool for estimating the average time needed to vote a ballot

[www.electiontools.org](http://www.electiontools.org)

# Professional development courses

Explore our online course offerings

Accessible  
Communication for  
Election Offices



Building an Election  
Website



Collecting,  
Analyzing, and  
Visualizing Election  
Data



Cybersecurity for  
Election Officials



Improving Your  
Election Website



Messages to  
Motivate Voters



Poll Worker  
Management Best  
Practices



Post-Election  
Audits



Social Media for  
Voter Engagement



[www.techandciviclife.org/courses](http://www.techandciviclife.org/courses)



How can you address your community's needs?

# **PROVIDING KEY ELECTION INFORMATION**



CENTER FOR  
TECH AND  
CIVIC LIFE

# Top questions for voters

1. What is on the ballot?
2. How do I get an absentee ballot, and when is it due?
3. Where do I vote?
4. Who is in office now?
5. How do I register to vote?

# Top question for non-voters

1. How do I participate in an election?

# Let's experiment

What's it like to search for information on a county election website?

# **#1 What is on the ballot?**



# Volusia County Department of Elections

*Lisa Lewis, Supervisor of Elections*



## Registered Voters as of 08/20/2018 (Includes Active and Inactive Voters)

Democrats	Republicans	NPA	Other	Total
135,535	137,696	117,812	2,956	393,999

[Register to Vote](#)

[Vote by Mail Request](#)

[Precinct Locator](#)

[Contact Us](#)

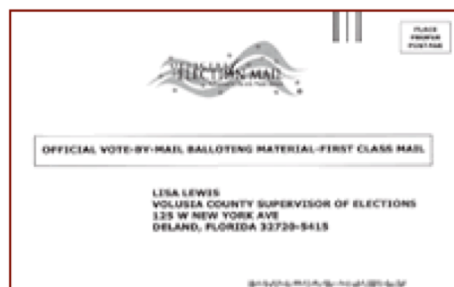
[Voter Status](#)

[Vote by Mail Status](#)

[Provisional Status](#)

[Translate](#)

[Avoid the Rush...](#)



[What is a Closed Primary Election?](#)



[Be Election Ready!](#)



[Sample Ballot](#)

Primary Election  
August 28, 2018 - Sample Ballot  
Elección Primaria  
28 de agosto 2018 - Papeleta de Muestra

[Order a Vote-by-Mail Ballot Today!](#)

[2018 Proposed Constitutional  
Amendments & Information](#)

[News & Updates](#)

[2018 Canvassing Board Information](#)



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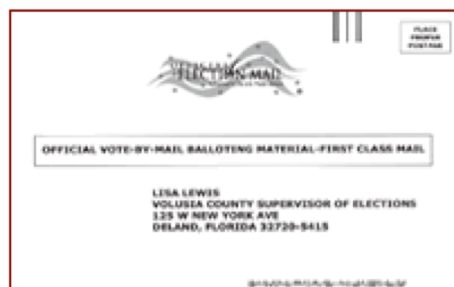
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[Vote by Mail Status](#)

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[2018 Proposed Constitutional  
Amendments & Information](#)

[News & Updates](#)

[2018 Canvassing Board Information](#)

# **#2 How do I get an absentee ballot, and when is it due?**





[Departments](#) [Jobs](#) [Commission](#) [News](#) [Contact Us](#)

## Election Information



**VOTE AND THE CHOICE IS**  
**YOURS**

Don't vote ... and the choice is theirs. Register ... or you have no choice.

[CLICK HERE](#)

**VIEW ELECTION RESULTS**

FIND OUT THE  
**ELECTION DAY  
RESULTS**

AVAILABLE AFTER POLLS  
CLOSE ON ELECTION DAY

[CLICK HERE](#)

FIND MY  
**POLLING PLACE**

[CLICK HERE](#)



CLICK HERE TO VIEW  
**ELECTION DAY  
REQUIREMENTS**



CLICK HERE FOR  
**VOTER  
REGISTRATION**



CLICK HERE FOR  
**EARLY VOTING  
INFORMATION**





[Departments](#) [Jobs](#) [Commission](#) [News](#) [Contact Us](#)

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**ELECTION DAY  
REQUIREMENTS**



CLICK HERE FOR  
**VOTER  
REGISTRATION**



CLICK HERE FOR  
**EARLY VOTING  
INFORMATION**



Connect With Us



(435) 477-8300

[Departments](#) [Jobs](#) [Commission](#) [News](#) [Contact Us](#)

# Early Voting



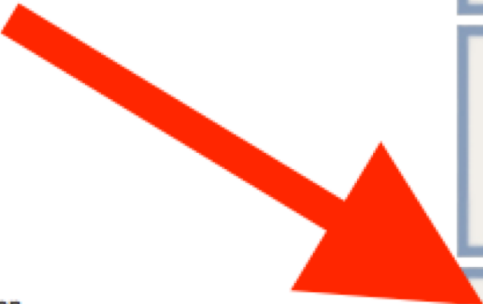
CLICK HERE TO VIEW  
**ELECTION DAY  
REQUIREMENTS**



CLICK HERE FOR  
**VOTER  
REGISTRATION**



CLICK HERE FOR  
**ABSENTEE  
VOTING INFO**



Click the Locations Below to see the Dates and Times of Operation

Locations	Dates
Iron County Courthouse 68 S 100 E, Parowan Utah	view
Cedar City Council Chambers 10 N Main St, Cedar City Utah	view
Enoch City Offices 900 E Midvalley Rd, Enoch Utah	view

# **#3 How do I register to vote?**



[DMS Online](#)

[Parcel Search](#)

[Home](#) [Elected Officials](#) [County Departments](#) [Employees](#) [General Information](#)

[Home](#) [Elected Officials](#) > [County Clerk](#)

Search...

## CLERK'S OFFICE

Phone: 785-742-2581

Fax: 785-742-7705



**Melissa Gormley**  
County Clerk

Deputy: Dawn Boyles  
Clerk: Barb Grabhorn

### Duties of the Office:

- Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners

#### Minutes

- [2003 Minutes](#)
- [2004 Minutes](#)
- [2005 Minutes](#)
- [2006 Minutes](#)
- [2007 Minutes](#)
- [2008 Minutes](#)
- [2009 Minutes](#)
- [2010 Minutes](#)
- [2011 Minutes](#)
- [2012 Minutes](#)
- [2013 Minutes](#)
- [2014 Minutes](#)
- [2015 Minutes](#)
- [2016 Minutes](#)
- [2017 Minutes](#)
- [2018 Minutes](#)

#### Election Info

- [Voting Locations](#)
- [Early Voting](#)
- [Sample Ballots](#)
- [Forms](#)
  - [Advance Ballot Application](#)
  - [Federal Post Card Application](#)
  - [Voter Registration](#)
- [Provisional Ballot Counting](#)
- [Notices](#)

#### Election Results



[DMS Online](#)

[Parcel Search](#)

[Home](#) [Elected Officials](#) [County Departments](#) [Employees](#) [General Information](#)

[Home](#) [Elected Officials](#) > [County Clerk](#)

Search...

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- [Notices](#)

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--2007 Minutes

--2008 Minutes

--2009 Minutes

--2010 Minutes

--2011 Minutes

--2012 Minutes

--2013 Minutes

--2014 Minutes

--2015 Minutes

--2016 Minutes

--2017 Minutes

--2018 Minutes

Election Info

--Voting Locations

--Early Voting

--Sample Ballots

--Forms

--Advance Ballot Application

--Federal Post Card Application

--Voter Registration

--Provisional Ballot Counting

--Notices

Election Results



# Recap

- Was it easy to find what you needed?
- Did the sites remind you of your own website?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the sites?

How design and language are related to usability

# **MAKING ELECTION INFORMATION USABLE**



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CIVIC LIFE



# Design → usability





**MANCHESTER, NH**  
New Hampshire's Business Capital

[Home](#) | [Recreation](#) | [Business](#) | [Pay Online](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Meeting Agendas](#) | [City Calendars](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Site Search](#)

[Home](#) » [Departments](#) » [City Clerk](#) » [Voter Registration and Elections](#)

## Site Navigation

- + [Home](#)
- + [Leisure and Entertainment](#)
- + [City Calendars](#)
  - [Emergency Center](#)
- + [e-Services](#)
- + [Mayor and Aldermen](#)
- + [Transportation](#)
- + [Departmental Expenditures](#)
- [Departments](#)
  - + [Airport](#)
  - + [Assessors](#)
  - + [Cemeteries](#)
  - + [Central Fleet Management](#)
  - [City Clerk](#)
    - [Departmental Expenditures](#)
    - [City Clerk Announcements](#)
    - [City Clerk Calendar](#)
    - [City Clerk FAQ](#)
    - [Contact City Clerk](#)
    - [About Our Government](#)
    - [Access to Governmental Records](#)
    - [Street Discontinuances](#)
    - [Meeting Minutes and Agendas](#)
    - [Boards and Commissions](#)
  - + [City Charter](#)
  - + [Code of Ordinances](#)

[City Clerk Home](#)

[Marriage Licenses](#)

[Access to Governmental Records](#)

[Voter Registration & Elections](#)

[Vital Records & Genealogy](#)

[Licenses & Permits](#)

[Dog Licensing](#)

[Municipal Archives & Records](#)

[Contact City Clerk](#)

## Voter Registration and Elections

The Office of the City Clerk conducts and preserves the integrity of all local, state and national elections held in Manchester, New Hampshire. The next scheduled local elections will feature the **State Primary Election** on **September 11, 2018** followed by the **State General Election** on **November 6, 2018**. The elections will be held between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. across all twelve city wards.

To view all upcoming ballots view our [Sample Ballot page](#) to see your choices as the ballots become available.

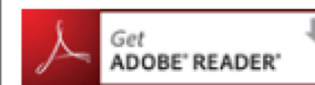
If you are unsure of the correct location for you to vote on Election Day, select the "Where do I vote?" option below.

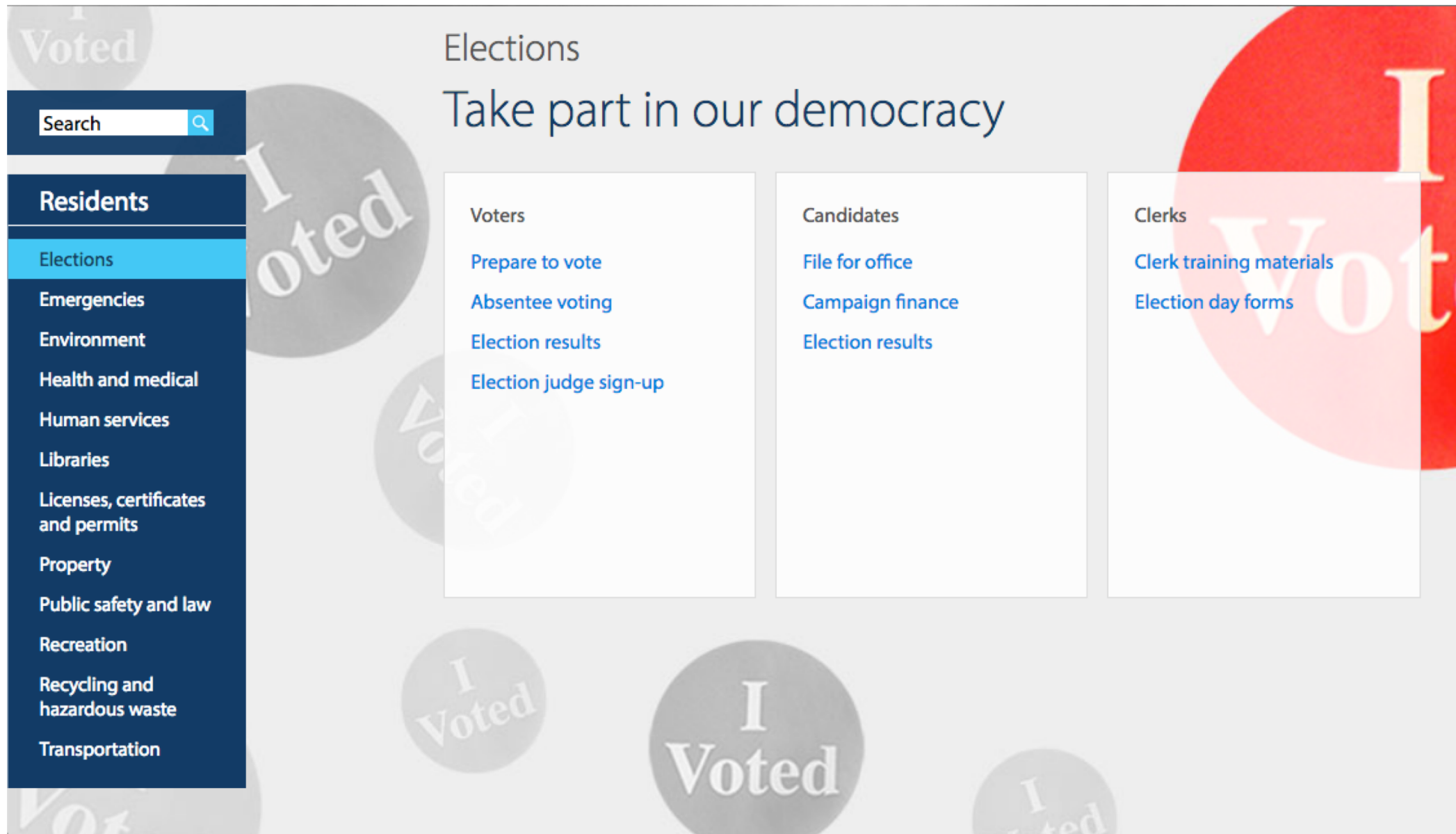
**Absentee Ballot applications** for the upcoming elections can be printed using the link below and completed in the convenience of your home. As a registered Manchester voter, you may mail, e-mail ([cityclerk@manchesternh.gov](mailto:cityclerk@manchesternh.gov)), fax, or hand deliver your completed application to the Office of the City Clerk, One City Hall Plaza, Manchester, NH 03101


- [Absentee Ballot Application - State Primary and/or General Elections \(9/11/18 & 11/6/18\)](#)

## Related Links




- [Election Schedules](#)
- [How to Register](#)
- [How to File for Office](#)
- [Political Campaign Reporting](#)
- [Political Committees](#)
- [Other Election Sites](#)
- [Ward Lines](#)
- [Political Calendar](#)
- [Sample Ballots](#)
- [Election Results](#)
- [Polling Locations](#)
- [Where do I Vote?](#)









Where History and Progress Meet


[HOME](#)
[ABOUT](#)
[CONTACT](#)
[CAREERS](#)





I WANT TO...
GOVERNMENT
RESIDENTS
SERVICES




### Prepare to Vote

[Oklahoma Voter Registration Form](#)  
[Facts about Proof of Identity for Voting in Oklahoma](#)  
[Voter Registration Locations in Tulsa County](#)  
[Request to Cancel Voter Registration](#)  
[Request to Cancel Registration of Deceased Voter](#)




### Sample Ballots and Filings

**Sample Ballots:**  
[February 13, 2018 - Sample Ballots](#)  
**Filings:***(Updates will be posted after 5:00 p.m.)*  
[Annual School Filings \(December 4-6, 2017\)](#)  
[City of Sand Springs and the City of Skiatook Filings \(December 4-6, 2017\)](#)  
[State Candidate Filing Information](#)




### Precinct Information

**Where Do I Vote?**  
[Precinct List - February 13 Election](#)  
[Precinct Locator/Online Voter Tool](#)  
[Precinct Maps](#)  
[Employment Application for Precinct Officials](#)




### Absentee Voting

*To request an absentee ballot, please select one of the following links:*  
[Oklahoma State Election Board Absentee Voting \(for voters whose ballots are to be mailed to an address within the contiguous United States\)](#)  
[Federal Voting Assistance Program \(MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS ONLY\)](#)




### Election Results

[2017 Unofficial Election Results](#)  
[2016 Election Results](#)  
[Archived Election Results](#)




### Elected Officials

[Elected Officials List](#)  
[Tulsa County Elected Officials](#)



### Important Dates and News

[2017 Election Schedule](#)  
[2018 Election Schedule](#)  
[Press Releases](#)



### Helpful Links

[Oklahoma State Election Board website](#)  
[Oklahoma State Election Board FAQ's](#)



# Inyo County Elections

**Kammi Foote, Registrar of Voters**

[Your Representatives](#)

[Clerk-Recorder](#)

[Voter registration](#)

[Candidates/Voter File](#)

[Military/Overseas voting](#)

[What's new](#)



**Election results**



**Next election: March 3, 2020**



**What's on the ballot**



**Register to vote**



**Update your voter registration**



**Where to vote**

# What is plain design?

When you publish content using plain design, readers can quickly and easily find the information they need.

# Plain design guidelines

- Include white space to make content manageable
- Use menus and headings effectively
- Use lists where appropriate
- Align content to the left of the page
- Use a sans serif font that is at least 12 point size
- Use strong contrast between text color and background color



# ~~Beautiful & interesting~~ Plain & usable





# What is plain language?

Plain language is writing designed to ensure the reader understands as quickly, easily, and completely as possible.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plain\\_language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plain_language)

## Before:

If you are unable to locate your voter registration information but think you are registered to vote and you have not moved outside of your county of prior registration, you may be eligible to cast a provisional ballot during in person absentee voting period at an appropriate early voting location or the county board of elections, or on Election Day at the correct polling place for your current address that may be counted.

## After:

If election workers can't verify your voter registration, you can vote using a provisional ballot. [Learn more about provisional ballots on our website.](#)

# Why is plain language important?

- Reaches people with low literacy
- Increases accessibility
- Avoids misunderstandings
- Creates transparency
- Builds trust between you and the public

# Plain language guidelines

- Write in the positive
- Use active rather than passive voice
- Address the reader directly
- Use short words, short sentences, and short sections
- Use the words voters will be looking for, and avoid jargon

Where do you go from here?

# STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR WEBSITE



CENTER FOR  
TECH AND  
CIVIC LIFE

# Simplify

		
OTHER TOWN OFFICES/SERVICES	<a href="#">Household Hazardous Waste &amp; Paint Collection - 04/27/2019</a> <a href="#">Woodbury Middle School</a>	
AGENDAS & MINUTES	<a href="#">2017-2018 Annual Report for Bethlehem (Search for Bethlehem in the "Entity" Search Field)</a> <a href="#">2019 - 2020 Agreement between Region 14 Board of Education &amp; Nonnewaug Education Association</a>	
	<a href="#">Free Electronics Recycling for Bethlehem Residents</a>	<a href="#">Mill Rate for Fiscal Year: 07/01/17 - 06/30/18</a>
BIDS	<a href="#">Town Offices and Boards</a> <a href="#">Click for 2019 Schedule of Meetings</a>	
JOB OPENINGS		<a href="#">Application for Employment</a> <a href="#">Municipal Housing Rehabilitation Program</a>
SENIOR CITIZENS	<a href="#">Board of Selectmen</a> <b>Leonard Assard - First Selectman</b> <a href="mailto:ljassard@bethlehemct.org">ljassard@bethlehemct.org</a> <b>David Deakin - Selectman</b> <a href="mailto:ddeakin@bethlehemct.org">ddeakin@bethlehemct.org</a> <b>David Butkus Jr. - Selectman</b> <a href="mailto:dbutkus@bethlehemct.org">dbutkus@bethlehemct.org</a>	<b>Meetings:</b> <b>First Tuesday - 7:00 PM - Library</b> <b>Third Tuesday - 7:00 PM - Town Hall</b>
BETHLEHEM POST OFFICE	<p>The Town of Bethlehem operates under the Selectman-Board of Finance-Town Meeting form of government. The Selectmen have limited legislative powers: They convene the town meeting and assist in drafting ordinances which the town meeting adopts; they are the principal administrative officials of the town; they are responsible for the building and maintenance of roads; they keep the town's financial records; they are responsible for the administration of the town welfare services; and they appoint people to administrative boards and commissions. The duties and responsibilities of the Selectmen are varied and wide-ranging. While most of the day-to-day work is done through managers who report to the First Selectman, policy and procedural matters are handled by the board, sitting in public meetings (generally held the first and third Tuesday evenings of each month). The meetings start at 7:00 PM, and always include time during which concerns of the public may be voiced.</p>	
BUSINESSES OF BETHLEHEM	<a href="#">Selectman's Office</a>	
COMMUNITY LINKS		
GENERAL INFORMATION		
CONSERVATION COMMISSION		

# Let your menu do the work



## Election Office

Ronnie Metsker, Election Commissioner

2101 East Kansas City Road  
Olathe, Kansas 66061

Phone: (913) 715-6800

Fax: (913) 791-1753

election@jocoelection.org

[Home](#) [Elected Officials](#) [Voter Information](#) [Become a Candidate](#) [Election Workers](#) [Election Info](#) [Election History](#)



# Cut redundant content

The screenshot shows the Cache County website interface. On the left is a sidebar with a header for the Clerk/Auditor, Jill N. Zollinger, and a list of navigation links. The main content area features an 'Elections' section with information about voter assistance centers and a red navigation bar with three links. A blue box with a red border contains the text 'NOTICE OF CACHE COUNTY 2018 PRIMARY ELECTION AUDIT'. Two blue arrows indicate redundancy: one from the 'Candidate Filings' link in the sidebar to the 'Candidate Filings' link in the red bar, and another from the 'Candidate Information' link in the sidebar to the 'Candidate Information' link in the red bar.

**Clerk / Auditor**  
Jill N. Zollinger, Clerk / Auditor

► Clerk's Office

▼ Elections

Home

Elected Officials

Candidate Filings

Candidate Information

Drop Off Locations

Elected Officials & Precinct Guide

Election Results

Fee Schedule

Instructions for By Mail Voters

## Elections

On Election Day Voter Assistance Centers Will be located at:

- Cache County Administration Bldg, 179 North Main, Logan
- Nibley City Offices, 455 West 3200 South, Nibley
- Smithfield City Offices, 96 South Main, Smithfield (Moved from Smithfield Civic Center)

**Voter Registration** **Candidate Information** **Candidate Filings**


**NOTICE  
OF  
CACHE COUNTY  
2018 PRIMARY  
ELECTION AUDIT**



# Use clear terminology



Election Information for



Home


General Elections

Consolidated Elections

Election Night Returns

Contact

Welcome



Johnson County Clerk/Recorder

1 week ago

Election Judges, Workers and Polling Places your check will be mailed out Wednesday (tomorrow) unless you call that you are picking up. Student Election Judges I have money for you!!! Please Share this post!! call 658-3611.

County

Robin Ha  
Johnson  
Election A  
Illinois Co  
2009

# Answer voters' top questions

**MINNEAPOLIS**  
**YourCity. YourVote.**

Next City-

**Voters** Candidates Election Judges Outreach & Education Results Data & Resources Ranke

Voter Registration  
Register on Election Day  
Tenant Notification of Voter Registration  
Where to Vote  
Vote Early (Absentee)  
Vote by Mail  
VOTERS  
Voter Assistance and Resources  
Voter Registration  
Pledge to Vote  
Register on Election Day  
What's on the Ballot?  
Where to Vote  
Voting Equipment  
Registration

Home > Voters

**Voters**

**FROM QUICK, SIMPLE ANSWERS TO DETAILED INFORMATION**

The next city-wide election in Minneapolis is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2017. This will be held at city offices, and will use [ranked-choice voting](#).

The image shows a hand pointing to a ballot with numbered choices (1, 2, 3) and candidate names. A large blue arrow points from the 'Voters' menu item to the ballot, and a large blue question mark is positioned next to the arrow.



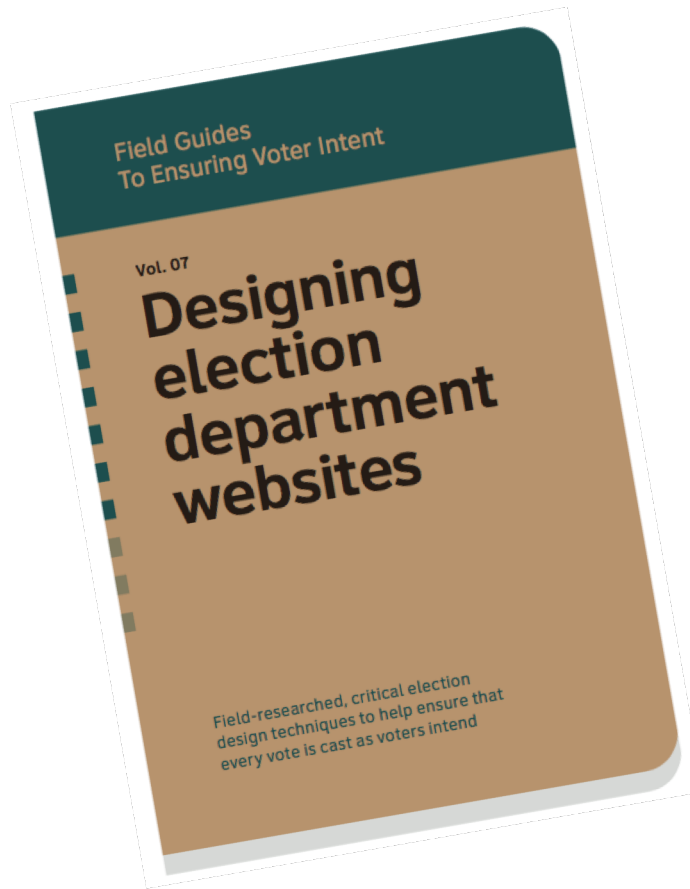
Looking for additional support to improve your  
election website?

# ELECTION WEBSITE RESOURCES



CENTER FOR  
TECH AND  
CIVIC LIFE

# Center for Civic Design field guide



[www.civicdesign.org/fieldguides/](http://www.civicdesign.org/fieldguides/)

# Course: Building a New Election Website



[www.techandciviclife.org/courses](http://www.techandciviclife.org/courses)

# Course: Improving Your Election Website



[www.techandciviclelife.org/courses](http://www.techandciviclelife.org/courses)

# Build your own site using our template



## Election website template

A template to create a straightforward election website that answers voters' top questions



[www.electiontools.org/tool/election-website-template](http://www.electiontools.org/tool/election-website-template)



# Usability Testing Kit



## Usability testing kit

A collection of guidelines and templates to help you check the usability of election materials



[www.electiontools.org/tool/usability-testing-kit](http://www.electiontools.org/tool/usability-testing-kit)

# Reviewing our objectives

- Better understand voters' informational needs
- Be familiar with principles of plain design and plain language
- Know immediate actions you can take to improve your election website
- Have resources to help you improve your site

# Vote at Home training for election officials

Free, 60-minute webinars covering best practices in local **Vote at Home** administration

## Envelope design

Thursday, February 13th | 2pm EST



## Supplementary materials

Tuesday, February 18th | 2pm EST



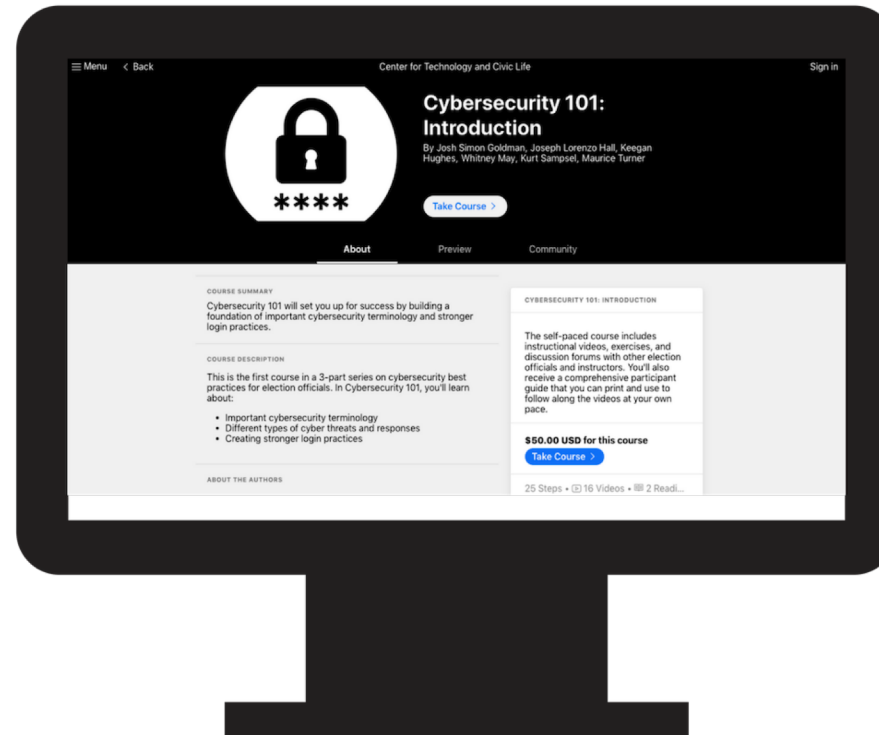
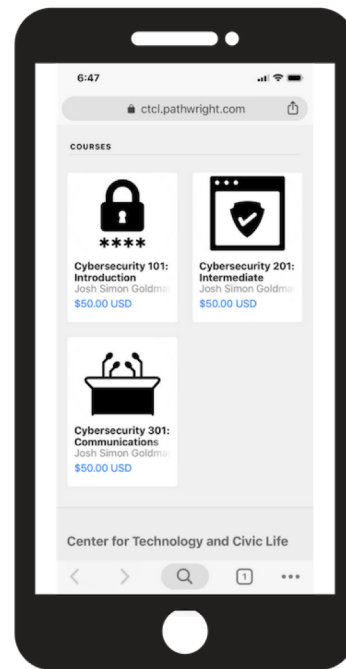
## Tools for tracking

Tuesday, February 20th | 2pm EST



[www.techandciviclife.org/vote-at-home](http://www.techandciviclife.org/vote-at-home)

# Self-paced election cybersecurity courses



ctcl.pathwright.com

# Questions?

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